

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 EUR-12 /088 W

-----071935Z 085414 /43

R 071815Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3164

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0514

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SHUM, OAS, UY

SUBJ: OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ORFILA'S MEETINGS

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: MONTEVIDEO 0489

SUMMARY. OAS SEC GEN, ALEJANDRO ORFILA, HAD A THREE-HOUR DISCUSSION WITH URUGUAY'S CINCS AND ABOUT TEN OTHER ADMIRALS AND GENERALS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HE EMPHASIZED THE ABSOLUTE SERIOUSNESS OF US CONCERN ON THIS ISSUE (GREATER WITH THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION THAN IT HAD BEEN WITH THE FORD ADMINISTRATION), AND SAID ALL NATIONS HAD TO EXPECT THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WOULD AFFECT THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE US. THE GENERALS CLAIMED URUGUAY HOLDS ABOUT 2000 PRISONERS AND DEMONSTRATED A STRONG SENSE OF GRIEVANCE OVER WHAT THEY CONSIDER A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING BY THE US OF THEIR PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THEY LATER ENCOURAGED ORFILA TO HAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE TO PUBLICIZE THEIR DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH HIM. ONE IMPORTANT GENERAL LATER TOLD ORFILA THAT WHEREAS THE GENERALS HAD BEEN ABOUT 50/50 BEFORE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTERNATIONAL INSPECTOR, HIS DISCUSSIONS AND HIS COMMENTS ON THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (IAHRC) MAY HAVE TIPPED THE SCALES TOWARD MAJORITY SUPPORT.

END SUMMARY

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1. ORFILA TOLD ME THAT HE HAD THREE SEPARATE MEETINGS ON THURSDAY, FEB. 3, DEVOTED PARTLY OR ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. THESE WERE WITH FONMIN ROVIRA, WITH PRES. APARICIO MENDEZ, AND FINALLY WITH THE THREE CINCS AND "ABOUT 10" OTHER ADMIRALS AND GENERALS. THIS LAST MEETING TOOK ALMOST THREE HOURS, HE SAID, AND INVOLVED A VERY FRANK

EXCHANGE. (THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT THIS MEETING INCLUDED MORE THAN HALF OF THE JUNTA DE GENERALES (JOG)-- WHICH IS REALLY THE CENTER OF POWER AND DECISION-MAKING IN URUGUAY TODAY.) ORFILA SAID THAT HE HAD GONE TO GREAT PAINS TO ESTABLISH THE SERIOUSNESS OF US CONCERN ON HUMAN RIGHTS, NOT JUST IN SELECTED COUNTRIES BUT EVERYWHERE. HE DREW NOT

ONLY ON THE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS TO AUTHENTICATE THIS, BUT ALSO ON HIS CONTACTS WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. HE SAID HE NOTED THAT WHEREAS THE FORD ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN GENUINELY CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RIGHTS, THERE WAS NO QUESTION IN HIS MIND BUT THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, REFLECTING AMONG OTHER THINGS WHAT HE CALLED THE "MYSTIQUE" OF THE PRESIDENT AND HIS DEEP SENSE OF HUMANISM, WOULD GIVE FAR MORE WEIGHT TO THIS ISSUE THAN ITS PREDECESSOR HAD. HE POINTED OUT, HE SAID, THAT IT WAS NOT SOMETHING AIMED ONLY AT RIGHTIST GOVERNMENTS, BUT INCLUDED COMMUNIST REGIMES AS WELL. IN FACT, HE NOTED, THE ISSUE WAS AIREED INITIALLY AT HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE USG IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS CASES IN THE SOVIET UNION AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

2. THE POINT HE WAS MAKING, HE SAID, WAS THAT NO ONE SHOULD TAKE THIS CONCERN LIGHTLY. WHILE ANY NATION, HE SAID, HAD THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO DO WHAT IT WANTED IN ITS OWN TERRITORY, IT MUST EXPECT THAT IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US IT WILL BE MEASURED AGAINST A HIGH STANDARD OF PERFORMANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY SHOULD KNOW, THEREFORE, THAT IF IN EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY THEY DO SOMETHING HARMFUL TO THEIR IMAGE ON THIS SUBJECT, THERE WILL BE A PRICE TO PAY IN TERMS OF RELATIONS WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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3. IN THE MEETING WITH THE MILITARY, ORFILA SAID, HE FOUND REAL CONCERN FOR THE PROBLEM AS IT AFFECTS URUGUAY, AS WELL AS A SENSE OF INJURY THAT THE US DOES NOT APPEAR TO APPRECIATE OR UNDERSTAND WHAT URUGUAY HAS GONE THROUGH, AND AN ATTITUDE OF DEFENSIVENESS. GEN. ALVAREZ, FOR EXAMPLE HE SAID, SUGGESTED THAT IF THE US WAS SO INSENSITIVE TO URUGUAY'S PROBLEMS, AS HE SAID IT APPEARS TO BE ALSO WITH REGARD TO OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTHERN CONE, THEN THE LOGICAL RESPONSE WOULD BE FOR THESE COUNTRIES (CHILE, ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY) TO JOIN TOGETHER IN ORDER MORE POWERFULLY TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AND ASSERT THEIR INTERESTS. ORFILA SAID HIS RESPONSE WAS THAT WHILE THEY COULD DO THIS, IT WOULD CLEARLY BE A GRAVE ERROR. HE POINTED OUT THAT EACH COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN PROBLEMS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND DIFFERING INTERESTS WHICH WOULD MAKE IT UNLIKELY, HE THOUGHT, FOR THEM TO JOIN HARMONIOUSLY WITH REGARD TO THEIR OVERALL INTERESTS. HE POINTED OUT THAT URUGUAYANS MUST BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE AND OPEN AND LEARN, HE SAID, FROM THE

BRAZILIANS AND EVEN THE CHILEANS, HOW THEY COULD TAKE STEPS TO IMPROVE THEIR SITUATION AND THEIR IMAGE. IN REGARD TO THIS, HE SAID, HE DISCUSSEDXHE POSSIBILITY OF OUTSIDE INSPECTION, POSSIBLY BY THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. THIS MET, HE SAID, WITH MIXED REACTION BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT IN THE END HE GHOUGHT URUGUAY WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THIS. IN REGARD TO THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS IN URUGUAY, ORFILA TOLD ME THAT THEY HAD SAID THE FIGURE WAS "JUST ABOUT 2000". THIS CAME UP, HE SAID, IN REGARD TO SOMEONE'S PROTESTING THE "EXAGGERATED" CLAIMS BEING GIVEN CURRENCY ABROAD ABOUT THE NUMBER OF "POLITICAL PRISONERS" IN URUGUAY. (THE DEPARTMENT WILL NOTE THAT THIS FIGURE IS THE SAME THAT URUGUAYAN OFFICIALS AT VARIOUS LEVELS HAVE BEEN CLAIMING PRIVATELY, AND EVEN PUBLICLY OF LATE, FOR AT LEAST THE LAST SIX

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INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 IO-13 EUR-12 /088 W
-----071934Z 085322 /43

R 071815Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3165

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0514

MONTHS.) ORFILA TOLD THE GENERALS THAT TO COMBAT EXAGGERATIONS TBOEY OUGHT TO PROVE A CASE BY PUBLISHING THE NAMES OF ALL SUCH PRISONERS, INCLUDING THE CHARGES AGAINST THEM AND THEIR WHEREABOUTS. ORFILA SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN INVITED TO VISIT PRISONS AND TO TALK TO WHOMEVER HE WISHED BUT DECLINED FOR LACK OF TIME. SOME OF THE GENERALS, HE SAID, SPOKE WITH A CLEAR SENSE OF GRIEVANCE THAT THE WORLD DOES NOT APPRECIATE THE EFFORT AND EXPENSE INCURRED BY THE GOU PRECISELY IN ORDER TO GIVE THIS KIND OF PRISONER EXCEPTIONAL CONDITIONS, IN CONTRAST TO THE LESS GOOD CONDITIONS PROVIDED COMMON CRIMINALS. THEY ALSO SPOKE OF THE MEDICAL AND HOSPITALIZATION ATTENTION GIVEN THEM; AND ONE OF THEM DEMONSTRATING AN ATTITUDE OF GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE US, WONDERED WHY THE US HAD NEVER SAID ANYTHING FOUR YEARS AGO WHEN THE WAR AGAINST THE TUPAMAROS WAS AT ITS HEIGHT AND (BY IMPLICATION) THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOMETHING TO CRITICIZE ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS WHEREAS NOW IT HAS TAKEN THIS STRONG POSITION WHEN (AGAIN BY IMPLICA-

TION) THERE IS MUCH LESS LEGITIMATELY TO CRITICIZE.

5. REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, ORFILA SAID THAT THIS HAD BEEN ARRANGED BY THE GOU AFTER CLEARING WITH HIM. AFTER THE MEETING, HE SAID, BRIGADIER CARDOZO (WHO IS SECRETARY OF PLANNING, COORDINATION AND INFORMATION) CALLED TO SAY HOW IMPRESSED THE GENERALS HAD BEEN WITH ORFILA'S COMMENTS AND THEIR INTEREST IN MAKING PUBLIC THE FACT THAT THE DISCUSSION HAD OCCURRED. ORFILA SAID HE REPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE GLAD TO MEET
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WITH THE PRESS BUT WOULD NOT WISH TO DISCUSS WITH THEM EXACTLY WHAT WAS SAID. THE MEETING WAS THEREFORE ARRANGED. ORFILA SAID HE ALSO ARRANGED TO PLAN A QUESTION BEFOREHAND WITH ONE OF THE REPORTERS. THIS RELATED TO THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND WAS PHRASED TO GIVE ORFILA AN OPPORTUNITY IN HIS RESPONSE TO CONFIRM THAT THE COMMISSION WAS NOW MEETING IN WASHINGTON AND TO SAY THAT HE UNDERSTOOD, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT KNOW, THAT THE CASE OF URUGUAY WAS BEING DISCUSSED IN IT. ORFILA ALSO
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TOLD ME THAT BRIGADIER CARDOZO NOTED HOW INTERESTED THEY HAD BEEN IN THE SUBJECT OF THE LAHRC. UP TO NOW, CARDOZO SAID, (AND I BELIEVE THIS POINT TO BE IMPORTANT AND REVEALING) THE GENERALS HAD BEEN SPLIT "ABOUT 50/50" ON THE SUBJECT OF INVITING THE LAHRC. NOW, HE REPORTEDLY TOLD ORFILA, THE MAJORITY MIGHT WELL BE IN FAVOR. IN TALKING ABOUT THE LAHRC, ORFILA TOLD ME, HE HAD URGED THAT THEY AT LEAST OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT A POSSIBLE VISIT BUT ALSO CAUTIONED ON HOW ADVERSELY THEIR IMAGE WOULD BE AFFECTED IF THEY WERE IN THE END TO FAIL TO AGREE TO A VISIT OR, WORSE, TO REFUSE ACCESS IF THE LAHRC WERE TO ANNOUNCE ON ITS OWN THAT IT WAS COMING.

6. ORFILA ALSO TOLD ME THAT AT THE GOU'S RECEPTION FOR THE OAS DELEGATES ON THURSDAY NIGHT, FEB. 3, HE HAPPENED TO BE TALKING TO ADMIRAL MARQUEZ (NO.2 IN THE NAVY) WHO HAD INVITED HIM TO VISIT THE PRISONS WHEN, FORTUITIOUSLY, THEY WERE JOINED BY JUAN DE ONIS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES. ORFILA SAID HE TOOK THE OCCASION TO URGE MARQUEZ TO INVITE SUCH PERSONS AS DE ONIS AND JOANNE OMANG OF THE WASHINGTON POST TO VISIT THE PRISONS. HE NOTED WITH SATISFACTION,

HE SAID, THAT ADMIRAL MARQUEZ HAD GIVEN DE ONIS HIS TELEPHONE NUMBER AND URGED HIM TO CALL FOR A DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND A POSSIBLE VISIT. WHILE DE ONIS LUNCHEDED WITH ME THE FOLLOWING DAY HE DID NOT MENTION THIS. I EXPECT TO SEE HIM AGAIN, HOWEVER, AND WILL LEARN WHAT HE HAS DONE.

7. I SUGGESTED TO ORFILA THAT I THOUGHT HIS CONTACTS WOULD BE
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VERY INTERESTING TO OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AND HOPED HE MIGHT HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY-DESIGNATE TODMAN ON HIS RETURN. HE SAID HE WOULD BE GLAD TO DO SO AND ASKED ME TO INFORM THE DEPARTMENT THAT HE INTENDED TO HAVE SIMILAR DISCUSSIONS IN ARGENTINA AND PARAGUAY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 07-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MONTEV00514
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770043-0641
Format: TEL
From: MONTEVIDEO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770267/aaaachal.tel
Line Count: 233
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 4b08d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MONTEVIDEO 489
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3392023
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OAS SECRETARY GENERAL ORFILA'S MEETINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SHUM, UY, OAS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4b08d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009